



10 PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW

This master plan has defined the vision, goals, and objectives for the future development of Chimney Rock State Park. After considering the three development alternatives and obtaining N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation comments, a park development program consistent with the North Carolina State Parks mission statement was identified for the park. The synthesis of these components produced the following results for the recommended facilities.

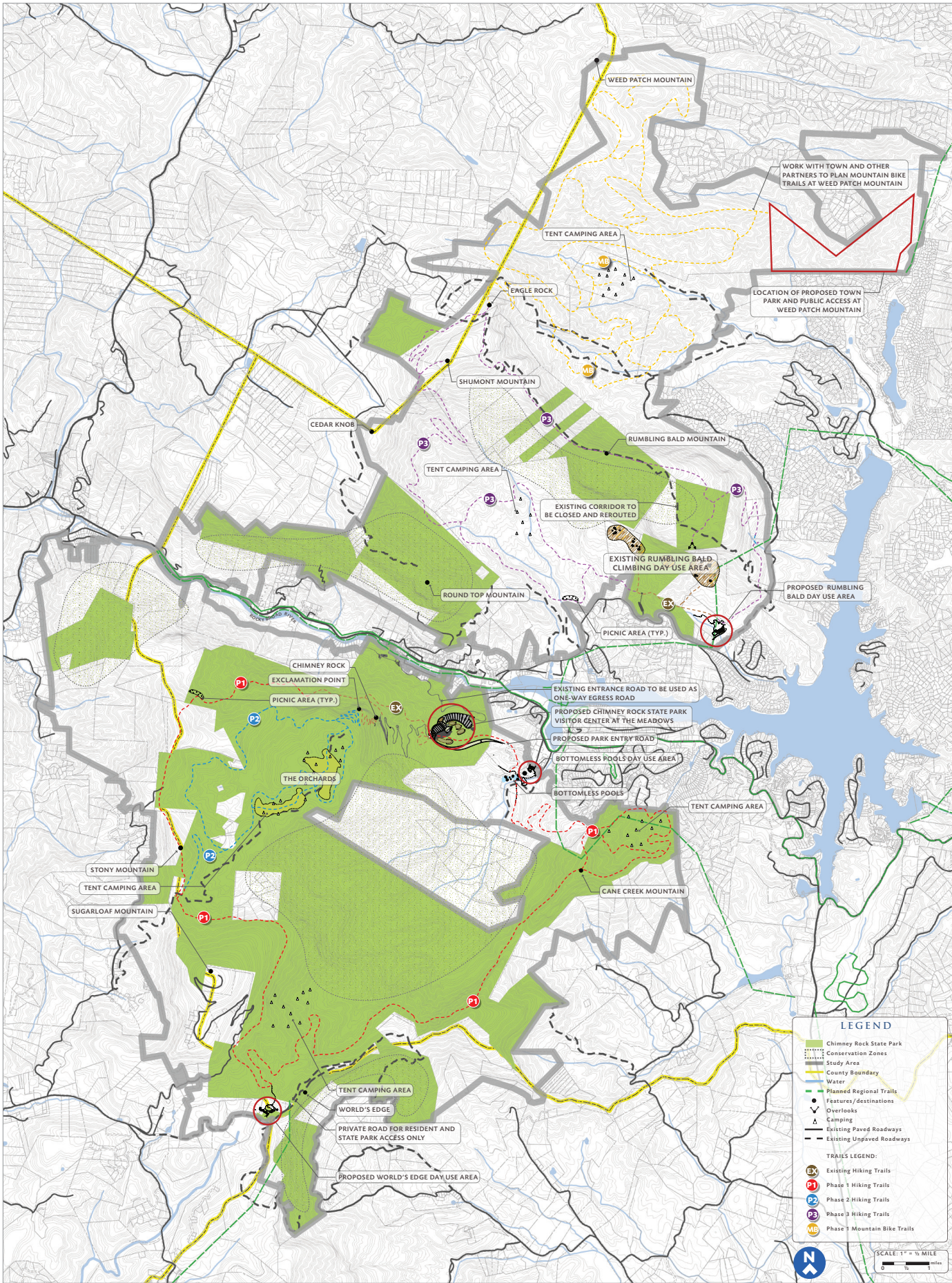
This chapter includes recommendations for future parkland acquisition, access and recreational development, interpretive opportunities, and conservation and resource management. It features detailed recommendations for existing facility improvements. A graphic of the proposed park master plan is illustrated in Figure 10.1.

The recommendations are designed to rectify operations and management concerns, correct for deficiencies in the present number and type of facilities, and to provide more opportunities for a variety of park users and visitors.



Spray cliffs at Hickory Nut Falls

FIGURE 10.1 CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK MASTER PLAN





EXISTING FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

REPAIRS AND RENOVATION

The Chimney Rock Attraction has expanded since opening in 1887 to include an entry road and bridge, entrance towers, tunnel and elevator, parking area, walkways, trails, toilet buildings, overlook deck, and several concession buildings. Many of the infrastructure additions were initiated in the 1920s and completed in the late 1940s. The concession structures were completed between the 1980s and early 2000s.

The Old Rock Café's interior and exterior will be restored and renovated. This will extend the longevity of the building and improve visitor experience. The park entrance towers are historic and iconic structures; therefore, an interpretive area will be provided with educational signage and exhibits for viewing. The interpretive area will be accessible by foot so that visitors can use the interpretive area while shopping or dining at the Village of Chimney Rock. To improve circulation and congestion issues both inside and outside the park, the existing park entrance road will be redesigned as a single outbound roadway from the Meadows to the Village of Chimney Rock. A new two-lane roadway will be built from the Town of Lake Lure to the Meadows, while the roadway from the Meadows to the Cliff Dwellers parking lot will remain a two-way road with surface improvements.

The metal warehouse, maintenance shop, park office, and attached maintenance shed will be consolidated into a new complex near the proposed visitor center at the Meadows. Relocating or rebuilding these structures will strengthen park operations, improve communications, and localize maintenance response. The ticket plaza will be redesigned and relocated as a new energy-efficient structure near the proposed visitor center. The redesign will allow both fee- and non fee-based visitation at the new visitor center. The Classroom at the Meadows, Grady's Discovery Den, and existing Toilet Building will be consolidated within the new visitor center to improve visitor experience and unify park design. Where feasible, buildings and materials will be reused. The pavilion on the Meadows will be relocated with additional picnic tables to accommodate the new visitor parking area.

The Private Lodge will be re-purposed as seasonal staff barracks. The building will be renovated and restored with sustainable materials. The retaining wall and parking area at Cliff Dwellers will be enhanced to improve the condition and to accommodate increased parking and visitation. The retaining wall will be reconstructed, the parking area will be repaved, and the stormwater network redesigned. The Cliff Dwellers Gift Shop's interior and exterior finishes will be renovated and consolidated into a one-stop shop that provides food, beverage, and gifts for sale to visitors. Parts of the elevator and tunnel are scheduled to be restored in 2011. These improvements will improve accessibility and operating efficiency while introducing the opportunity for park branding. Moonshiner's Cave will be repurposed as a geologic exhibit, a theme that is more consistent with N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation's mission. To provide improved educational facilities directly at the source, the Sky Lounge will become an interpretive area. Concessions, café seating, and the Sky Lounge gift shop will be relocated elsewhere in the park.

IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING TRAILS

Many of the existing trails are in need of maintenance and improvements to better serve the growing recreational needs of park visitors. Some of these trails were poorly sited and constructed and are therefore not sustainable. Improving the trail tread in heavily overused areas to limit user impacts may prevent the need for rerouting. A comprehensive interpretive signage network will promote park resources while protecting natural areas.

The entire stair structure and park boardwalk network will be inventoried for structural integrity. Boardwalks that are heavily overused will be rebuilt, and non-skid materials will be used in damp areas. Improvements to the structures will extend the life of the boardwalks and improve visitor safety. A project to improve a



section of the stair network will commence in 2012. The Great Woodland Adventure Trail will be continually maintained and expanded as needs arise. Future trail connections will be provided. The Four Seasons Trail will be improved to protect natural resources and improve the quality of the trail. In areas with heavy overuse, boardwalk will be constructed to reduce erosion and long-term impacts to surrounding ecology. Hickory Nut Falls Trail will be continually maintained to improve visitor experience. Adequate lookout areas and seating will be provided. Increased visitation may further trail overuse and trail hardening may be considered in eroded areas. The Outcroppings Trail is heavily overused and consistently maintained. Stair structures will be rebuilt that are in need of repair, and non-skid materials will be used in damp areas. The use of sustainable materials will extend the life of the structures and increase visitor safety. Pulpit Rock, the Subway, and the Grotto will be reopened as trail destinations after structural improvements are made to the boardwalk and trails. The Skyline Trail to Exclamation Point has a 200-foot gain in elevation; therefore gravel or natural surfacing are not feasible materials for the long term of this trail. More structural surfacing will be provided such as boardwalk or stair trails to improve overall maintenance and visitor experience.

Additional miles of undesignated footpaths and jeep trails are located on the recently acquired properties. No signage currently exists on these undesignated corridors. Because these footpaths and jeep trails were poorly sited and constructed, they have become severely denuded in many areas and are considered unusable. A comprehensive trails review will be conducted by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation prior to any new trail construction. Once newly designated trails have been established at Chimney Rock State Park, the remaining footpaths and jeep trails will be closed for public use and allowed to naturalize.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR REPAIRS AND RENOVATION: \$850,000

PROPOSED VISITOR CENTER AT THE MEADOWS

Chimney Rock State Park affords opportunities for recreation, education, and stewardship of western North Carolina's most unique and significant natural resources. The development of a park visitor center will provide a focal point for interpretive programs, a hub for natural resource-based recreation, and more efficient park operations, patrol, and management.

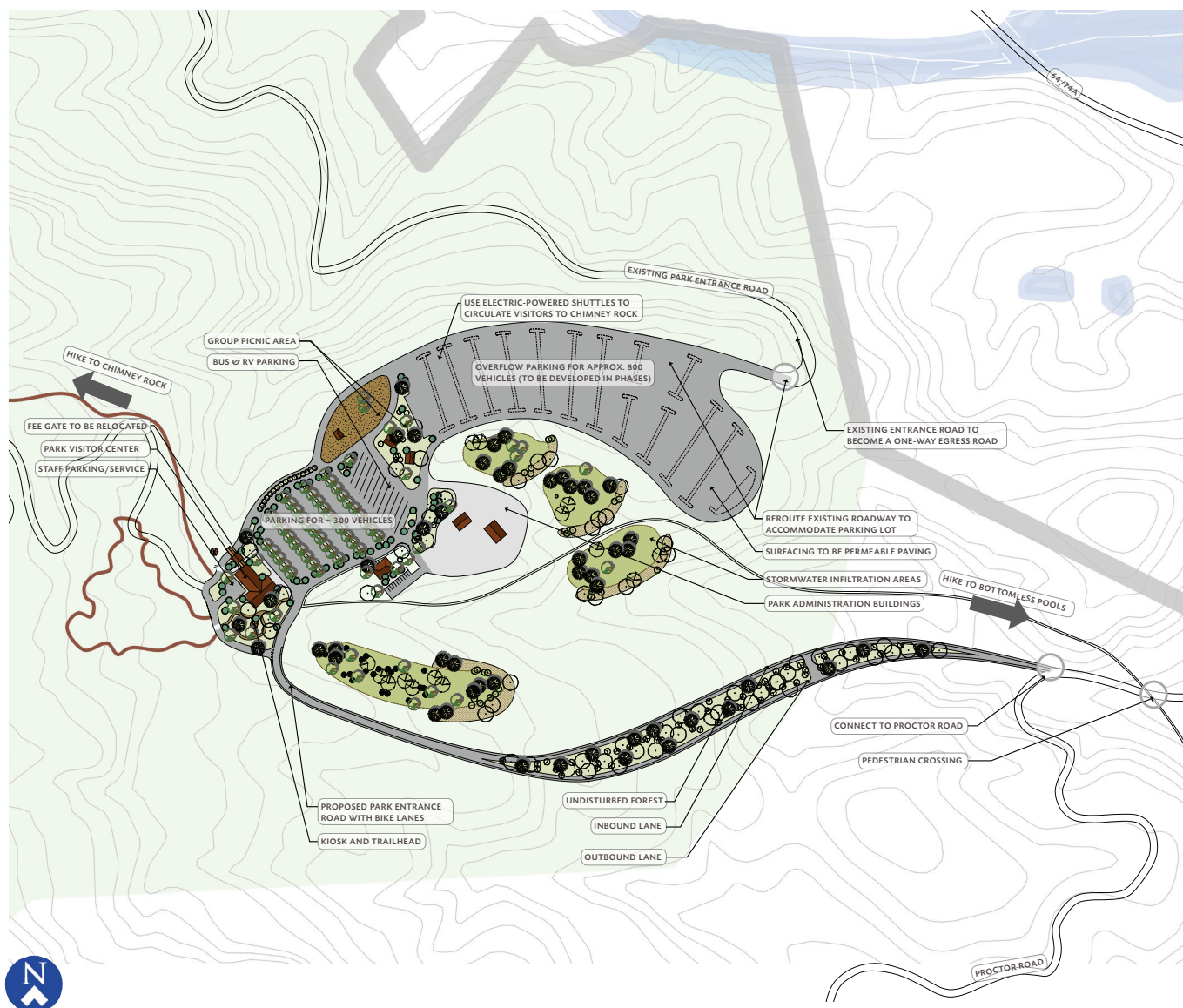
The Meadows is a four-acre, relatively flat parcel of land located on park property along the existing park entrance road. It is currently used by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation as seasonal overflow parking and is the location for Grady's Discovery Den. Just south of the Meadows is the fee gate and other park facility buildings. The actual footprint of the "Meadows area" is approximately 15 acres of total developable land for a visitor center. Existing roadway and utility access are already in place. This location also strengthens the central park core concept, and allows the park visitor to experience the park in its natural setting. If the fee gate and park administration buildings were integrated with the proposed visitor building on the Meadows' high point, the remaining amount of space would be available for visitor and overflow parking (see Figure 10.2).

DESIGN CONCEPT

The Chimney Rock State Park visitor center will have the capability to serve a broad range of park visitors, as identified in Chapter 4. The visitor center will offer diverse opportunities for recreation and education. The surrounding trails and facility will engage visitors with a 15-minute visit to obtain park information, or a full day of experiencing interpretive areas, hiking, educational programs, and exhibits. The visitor center will become a hub for regional recreational opportunities and local activities to accommodate diverse visitor interests and backgrounds. Visitors of all abilities will have the opportunity to explore the facility and design their own experience at the park.



FIGURE 10.2: VISITOR CENTER AT THE MEADOWS



VISITOR CENTER

The main visitor center will be 6,500 square feet and constructed at the western end of the Meadows. The building will be designed and implemented using green building strategies aimed at Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification. A facility this size could accommodate 300-400 people at a time. Maintenance and storage will also be located onsite. Utilities are already available at the Meadows and will need improvements to meet the demands of the proposed facilities. The amount of space onsite provides an opportunity to treat stormwater locally with innovative solutions such as infiltration gardens and bioretention areas. These areas will become educational tools to incorporate into interpretive programming. Alternative energy sources such as solar and geothermal heating and cooling will be used to the extent feasible.

DAY USE

The fee gate will be relocated further up the entrance road so that visitors who access the visitor center obtain information without paying a fee. Those who wish to drive and park at the Chimney Rock elevator will pay admission at the fee gate. Picnic areas, short trails and interpretive areas will be located around the visitor center as well as access to extended trails across the park. A contact station will be located within the



visitor center where visitors can purchase permits and daily parking passes. Information will be available for other park activities and day use areas with directions and maps.

PARKING

Paved parking will be available for bus and RV parking, with spaces for 300 vehicles. A separate parking area will be provided for ranger vehicles and park staff at the rear of the visitor center. For the paved areas, permeable solutions will be used to the extent feasible. Further soil and drainage improvements will be necessary if permeable solutions are used. Overflow parking has the option to be phased into construction based on budget costs and demand, accommodating up to an additional 500 vehicles.

PROPOSED ENTRANCE ROAD

In order to satisfy the increase in visitation and reduce vehicle congestion, a new two-way entrance road is proposed that will connect the visitor center parking area to Proctor Road. The new entrance road will be constructed on a wide, flat ridge that exists between a stream along the eastern edge of the Meadows and southern parts of Proctor Road. From its intersection at the first bend along Proctor Road, the new half-mile road will feature a split inbound and outbound lane design to minimize impact to the existing forest canopy. The lower section of Proctor Road will be improved to accommodate the additional park traffic.

The roadway will be built to modern standards, capable of supporting RVs, vehicles with trailers, and buses, and will also contain bicycle lanes on both the inbound and outbound lanes. It will be designed for low speed traffic with narrow lanes and minimal cut and fill. This new road will become the Chimney Rock State Park entrance road, while the former entrance road will become a one-way egress road to Chimney Rock Village. Peak visitation in the park occurs in the early morning and mid-day hours, before Chimney Rock Village merchants are open for business. Transforming the current entrance road into a one-way exit road will deliver state park visitors to Chimney Rock Village where they can shop and dine during late morning, afternoon and evening hours. The Meadows will be designed to direct existing traffic flow into the Village of Chimney Rock.

Additionally, the existing park road from the Meadows to the Cliff Dwellers parking area will be improved and widened. This project would add or improve retaining walls, add culverts for stormwater drainage and upgrade the utilities. Utility improvements include a new water line with pump stations, gravity sewer line, and telecommunications and electric lines.

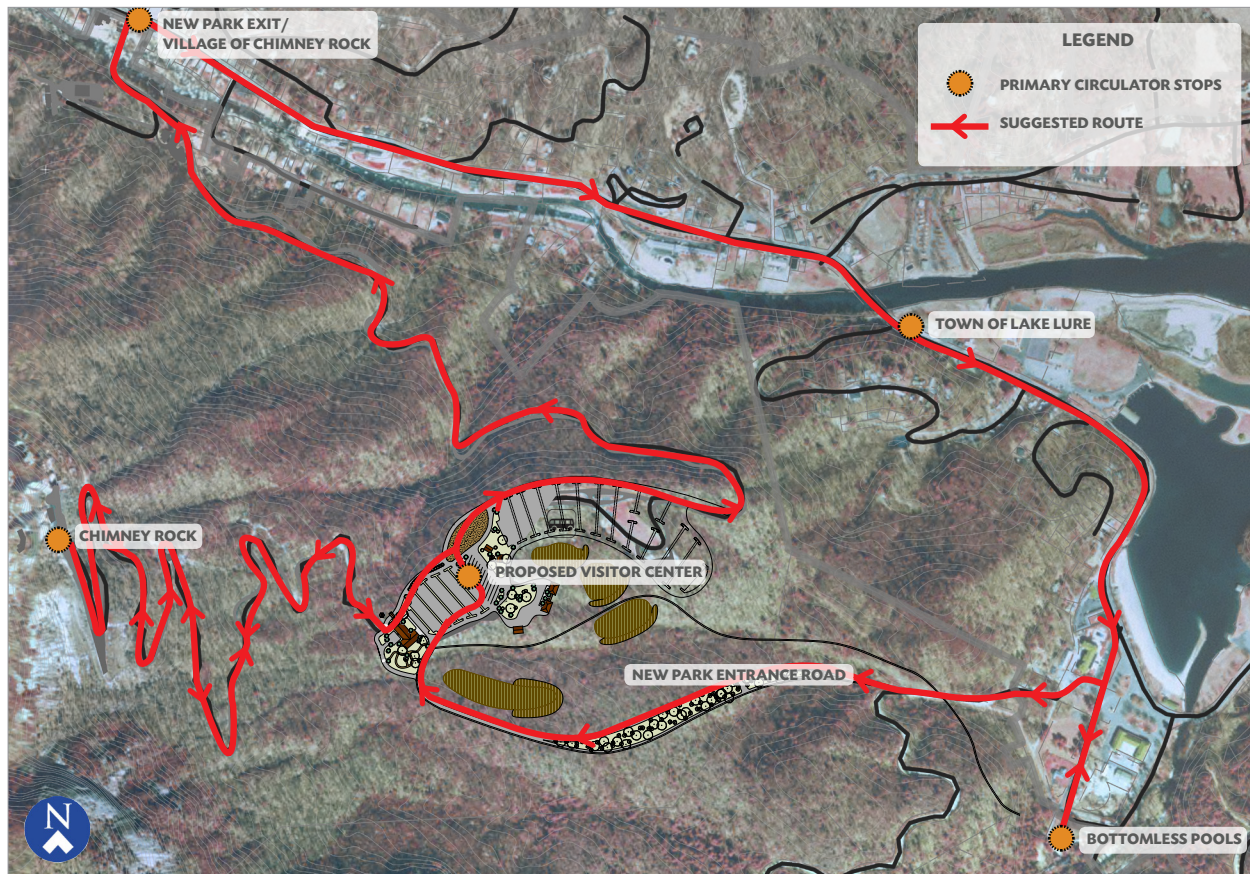
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR VISITOR CENTER AT THE MEADOWS: \$20,751,200

HICKORY NUT GORGE TRANSIT CIRCULATOR

The Hickory Nut Gorge Transit Circulator is a bus system that would shuttle visitors to and from destinations in the Hickory Nut Gorge. Partnerships could be developed among the local Tourism Development Authority, Chimney Rock Village, the Town of Lake Lure, and other regional stakeholders to help sponsor the circulator and stimulate the local economy by developing a communications strategy that encourages visitors to support local businesses. Providing an alternative transportation option will also help the young, disabled, and senior citizens enjoy more of the region's attractions. The introduction of an electric or natural gas-powered transit circulator will do more than help mitigate parking concerns and reduce traffic volumes. Reducing the number of vehicles entering the gorge will also cut down on emissions and improve air quality.



FIGURE 10.3: TRANSIT CIRCULATOR ROUTE



SUGGESTED ROUTE

Figure 10.3 illustrates a potential route for the circulator. The transit circulator's route will begin at the visitor center in Chimney Rock State Park. Operating clockwise, the vehicle will exit the one-way egress road and stop at Chimney Rock Village, Town of Lake Lure, and the Bottomless Pools day use area. The circulator will return to the visitor center via the proposed entrance road from Proctor Road. Concurrently, an internal circulator will transport visitors to and from the visitor center and the Chimney Rock elevator. The final routes will be determined with input from stakeholders. Covered kiosk stops will be developed displaying detailed regional maps, brochures, and graphics which clearly depict the region's features and attractions.

FREQUENCY OF SHUTTLES

Shuttle speed, number of stops, size and number of vehicles, and vehicle capacity in turn define the frequency of the circulator. In addition, peak season and surrounding traffic congestion will also impact operations. To ensure that the circulator is convenient to use, it will be important to provide frequent loops, especially during peak season. Vehicles will travel anywhere from 10-20 miles per hour and have the capacity to transport 10 to 25 patrons. While shuttles that are large have the capacity for higher numbers of visitors, slower average speeds make for increased headways between stops. The roadways at Chimney Rock State Park are narrow and winding in many areas. Providing smaller, maneuverable vehicles at more frequent intervals will contribute to an improved visitor experience. Headways of no more than 15 minutes at each stop are recommended to encourage use.

Careful planning with other stakeholders for the operations and management of the circulator will be crucial to its success. Addressing key trip generators, patterns, vehicle type and size, number of vehicles, operating hours, and ridership potential will require a more detailed study.



PROPOSED DAY USE AREAS

Several new day use areas are proposed that will provide user access to the south, central, and north regions of Chimney Rock State Park. Information, signage, and maps will be available for each day use area at the proposed visitor center. The following locations will be located and designed to protect areas of significant natural heritage and provide a wider variety of opportunities for park users to experience Chimney Rock State Park. At a minimum, each day use area will include vehicle parking, contact stations, a toilet building, hiking trail connections, and adequate receptacles to manage refuse. For all proposed day use areas, buildings will be designed and implemented using green building strategies.

WORLD'S EDGE

One of the southernmost destinations in Chimney Rock State Park, World's Edge takes its name from the one-mile long series of steep, southeast-facing slopes that fall away to sweeping views of the Hickory Nut Gorge. Residing in an area rich with significant natural communities, World's Edge is remote, wild, and attractive to hikers.

South at the end of World's Edge Road, a 29-acre tract of land stretches along the World's Edge escarpment. The tract's proximity to World's Edge Road and the amount of developable space make it an ideal location for day use that could accompany visitor parking and picnic areas. An existing residence on the property provides ample space for an interpretive area with exhibits and an information desk. A large deck at the rear of the residence affords 180-degree views out to the western piedmont, making it an ideal viewing platform. In addition, smaller rooms in the main residence could serve as park office space and storage. Figure 10.4 illustrates the proposed layout of facilities at World's Edge.

A ranger residence or remote patrol cabin is proposed at World's Edge due to its distance from the proposed visitor center. Travel times on existing roadways from the Chimney Rock State Park entrance to World's Edge exceed 45 minutes. The ranger residence will be located on existing park property at the north side of World's Edge Road. A ranger residence will improve operations and patrol and allow for southern park access for park staff. The development of this project will require the acquisition of additional land.

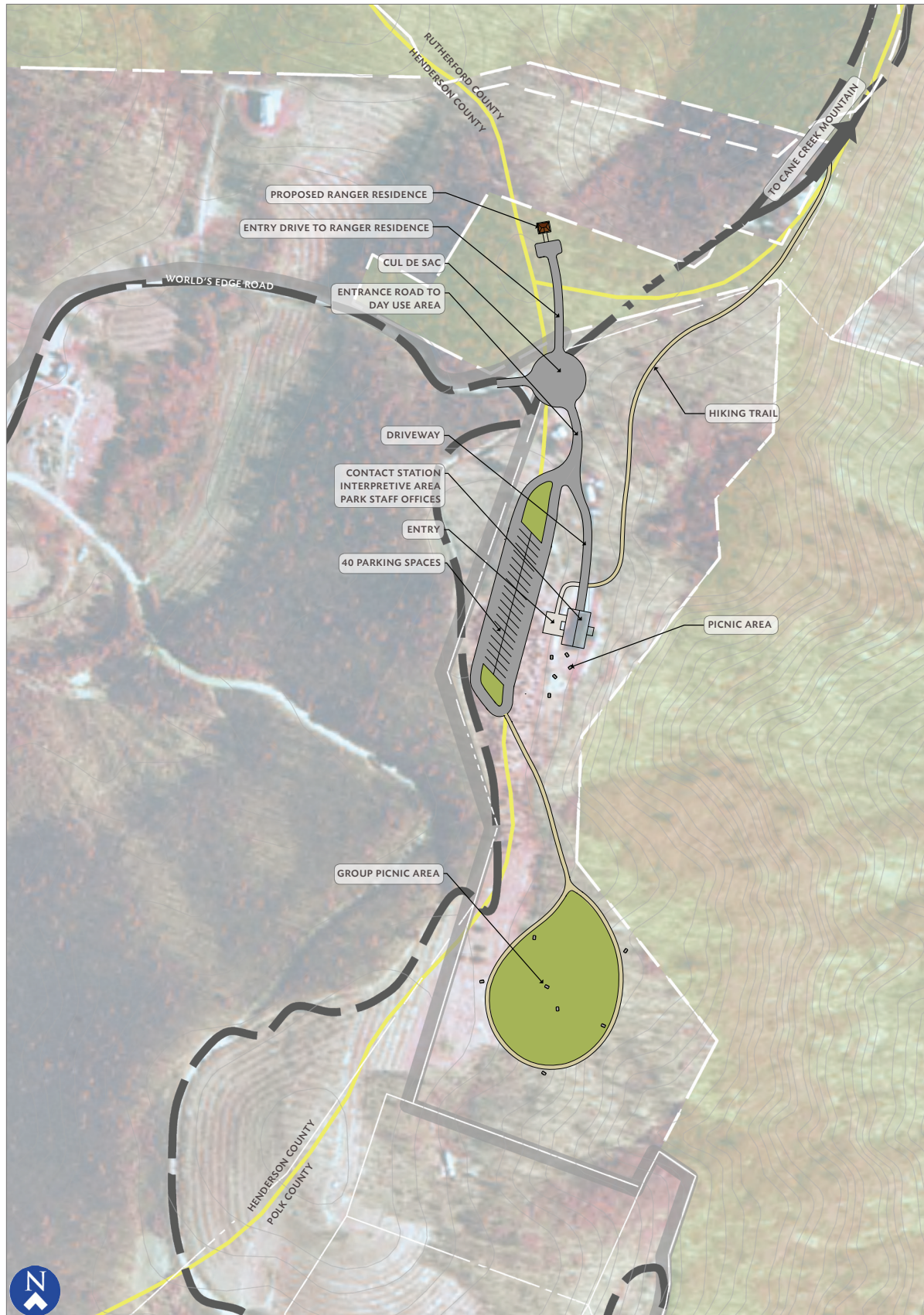
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR WORLD'S EDGE DAY USE AREA: \$650,000



View from World's Edge



FIGURE 10.4: WORLD'S EDGE DAY USE AREA





BOTTOMLESS POOLS

The historic Bottomless Pools attraction is proposed to be reopened as a day use area. Reopening of the attraction will require acquisition of additional land. The historic home at Bottomless Pools will be renovated and re-used as a contact station or information center. Some elements of the historic attraction will be restored and reopened for public access and use. For example, the trail system will be restored and constructed to provide new observation platforms for viewing the famed Bottomless Pools.

South of Lake Lure Inn, where Beach Street connects with Bottomless Pools Road, there is adequate space for a driveway entrance and parking for 50 vehicles (see Figure 10.5). To limit costs and preserve the character of the Bottomless Pools, the covered bridge will be restored and reopened to pedestrian traffic only. This will permit viewing of the pools and cut down on vehicle congestion and the necessity for more paved surfacing. Interpretive areas will be located in and around the bridge and near the pools, and to the extent desired by N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, buildings renovated and operated as historic exhibits. Visitors will enjoy short hiking opportunities, picnicking, observation and interpretive areas at the pools, and connections to extended hiking trails to Chimney Rock and Cane Creek Mountain.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR BOTTOMLESS POOLS DAY USE AREA: \$700,000



Bottomless Pools

FIGURE 10.5: BOTTOMLESS POOLS DAY USE AREA





RUMBLING BALD

The existing climbing day use area at Rumbling Bald, located off Boys Camp Road, provides parking for 35 vehicles and trail connections to climbing and bouldering areas. Much of the climbing areas and trails at Rumbling Bald are in need of maintenance and improvements to better serve the growing recreational needs of visitors and to protect natural resources. The demand for access and use at this location is not satisfied with the current parking capacity and therefore needs to be expanded in the future. To ensure that Rumbling Bald will accommodate growing visitation, an additional day use area is proposed further east at the end of Boys Camp Road to include additional parking and sanitary facilities. This new facility will allow for increased access to regional hiking and other activities while taking the pressure off the existing climbing day use area. Figure 10.6 shows a potential layout for the proposed day use area. Where Boys Camp Road ends and becomes unpaved, a large flat area is the location for this additional day use area at Rumbling Bald.

A contact station is proposed at the Rumbling Bald day use area, along with parking for approximately 75 vehicles. Where feasible, all parking areas will feature permeable surfacing materials, and stormwater will be treated locally through infiltration gardens or bioretention areas. A toilet building, picnic area and kiosk is also proposed. From the proposed Rumbling Bald day use area, visitors will access loop trails as well as connections to Rumbling Bald.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR RUMBLING BALD DAY USE AREA: \$940,200



Under the tree canopy at Rumbling Bald



FIGURE 10.6: RUMBLING BALD DAY USE AREA





RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

Chimney Rock State Park's 4,531 acres are principally untouched landscapes. It provides habitat for some of the most significant wildlife communities in the country. Its resources have the potential to make it a world-class destination for natural resource-based recreation. A combination of use and protection must be achieved that blends conservation, protection, and preservation of natural resources with access and enjoyment of those features. The following items should be considered when developing recreational activities at Chimney Rock State Park:

- Separate all proposed trails, picnicking, day use areas, and camping away from documented sensitive natural resource areas. Reroute existing trails if their alignment threatens wildlife habitat, is unsustainable, or compromises public safety.
- Develop a signage program for the park that includes wayfinding, regulatory, and environmental education signage for the natural heritage areas.
- Develop a park map and brochure that details allowable activities and depicts recreational opportunities offered in Chimney Rock State Park.
- Provide a range of recreational options at various skill levels for a diverse visitor experience.

REGIONAL HIKING TRAILS

A regional greenway and trail system is emerging throughout the Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure region. This system is comprised of four important trails:

- Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trail
- Lake Lure Summits Trail
- Town of Lake Lure Trails and Greenways
- Chimney Rock State Park Trails

The majority of the regional trail system is planned and designed to serve the needs of hikers, walkers and nature lovers. Some elements of the regional trail network may support equestrians and mountain biking.

The Upper Hickory Nut Gorge Trail extends from Hickory Nut Gap, Little Pisgah Mountain and Bear Wal-low Mountain to Gerton Village, then on to Bearwallow Village, over Raven Rock and Blue Rock Mountain and on to World's Edge in Chimney Rock State Park. The total distance of this proposed trail is more than 60 miles.

The Town of Lake Lure has a plan to establish an extensive network of greenways and trails. The adopted 2010 Comprehensive Plan for Lake Lure illustrates a greenway network that extends around the lake, and links with adjacent streams to provide connections to residential, commercial, retail and tourist areas of the town. Portions of the proposed greenway also extend to Chimney Rock State Park.

An extensive hiking trail system is planned for Chimney Rock State Park, comprised of a southern loop trail, the Chimney Rock Mountain Loop Trail, and hiking trails in the northern portions of the park, principally on and around Rumbling Bald Mountain. The total distance of proposed trails is approximately 50 miles. Trail users in the northern section of the park will be able to connect to the southern section of the park by way of the town's greenway system.



PROPOSED HIKING TRAILS

A substantial amount of new hiking trails in Chimney Rock State Park are recommended in this master plan. Trails of various difficulty, length, and interest are proposed to provide a diverse experience that will be enjoyed by the park visitor, regardless of ability. Families, senior citizens, and experienced hikers will have the ability to design their trip to their interest.

A comprehensive signage program will be provided that communicates trail distances, times, and destinations for all proposed trails. Trail destinations will be opportunities for educational exhibits and interpretive signage. An example of a typical hiking trail at Chimney Rock State Park is shown in Figure 10.7.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK TRAILS

A new sustainable route for the Skyline Trail was established in the master planning process to take trail enthusiasts to new observation areas where historical, breathtaking views of Hickory Nut Gorge, Lake Lure and Hickory Nut Falls can be enjoyed. Figure 10.8 illustrates the new realigned trail.

Historically, the Skyline Trail and Cliff Trail have provided hikers with access to some of the highest elevations and most stunning natural resources of Chimney Rock Mountain. These breathtaking trails have been some of the most beloved in the history of Chimney Rock Park. In 2008, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation closed portions of these trails in order to evaluate them for future access and use.

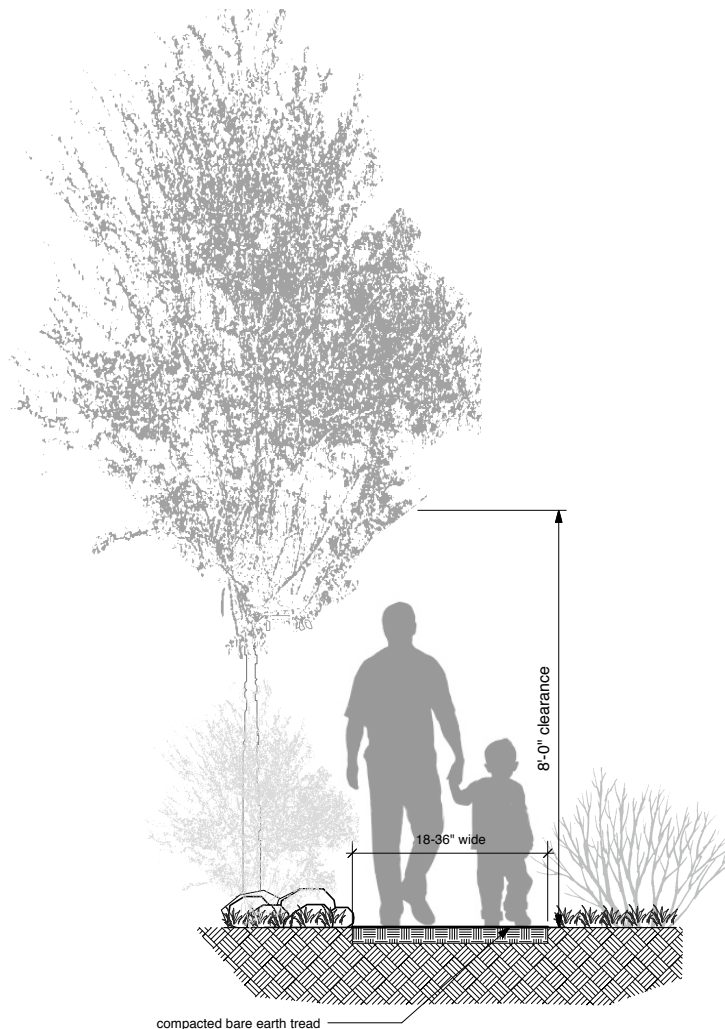


FIGURE 10.7: TYPICAL HIKING TRAIL



It is important that Chimney Rock State Park balance the conservation, protection and preservation of natural resources with access and enjoyment of those resources. The former alignment of the Cliff Trail and upper portion of the Skyline Trail cannot be properly managed to support public access and use, due to environmental factors, concerns regarding public health, safety and welfare, and budget constraints.

Therefore, the Cliff Trail and upper portion of the Skyline Trail will be dismantled and removed. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will explore opportunities to work with an outdoor adventure contractor that offers mountaineering or other high adventure recreation access along the route of the former Cliff Trail.

A new trail alignment will be established from Exclamation Point along the top of Chimney Rock Mountain to designated observation areas on top of the mountain. Observation platforms will be constructed to provide views of the top of Hickory Nut Falls, Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure. The trail will stay inside the existing tree line and off the cliff faces of Chimney Rock Mountain.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR NEW SKYLINE TRAIL ALIGNMENT: \$163,000

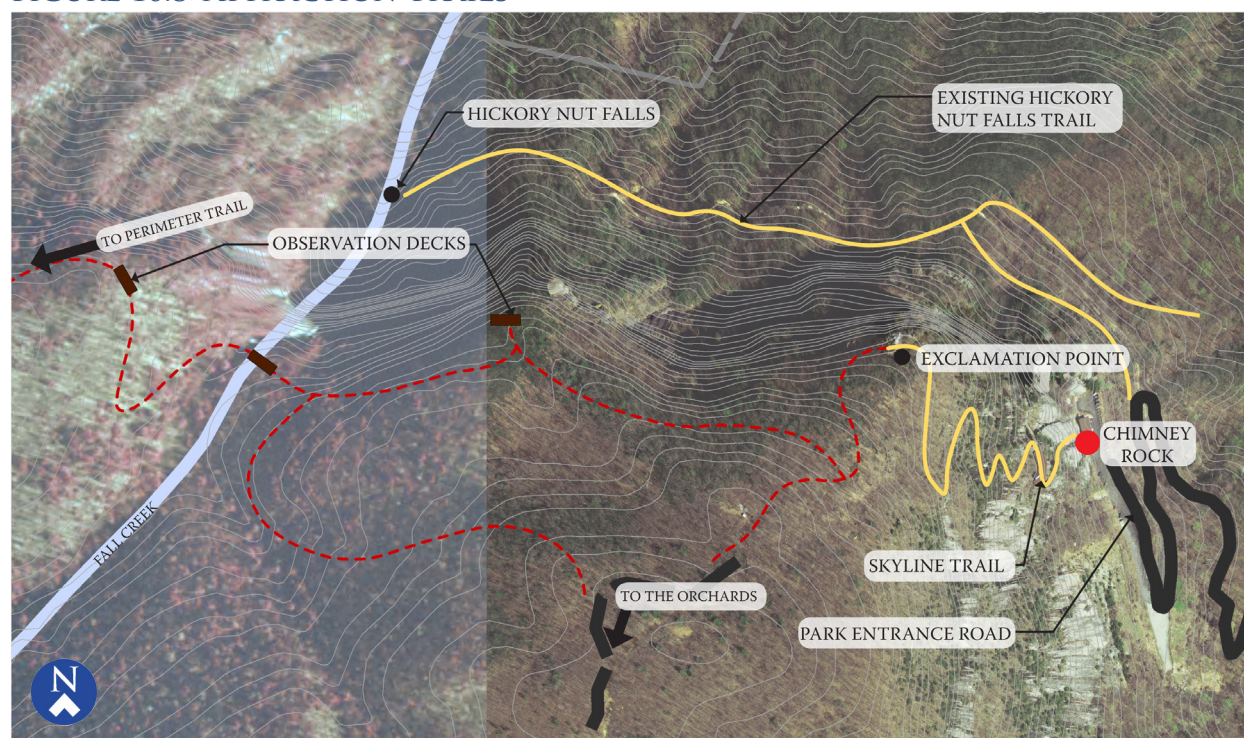
A second trail alignment will be established that extends to the proposed primitive campground located at the Orchards, and connects to the proposed Chimney Rock Perimeter Trail.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR ORCHARDS LOOP TRAIL: \$350,000

PERIMETER TRAIL

The perimeter trail proposed at Chimney Rock State Park is an extended, multi-day experience for long distance hikers of all abilities. The perimeter trail showcases the biologically diverse natural resources within the park while offering hike-in primitive camping in a secluded environment. Trail users will access

FIGURE 10.8: ATTRACTION TRAILS



the 15-mile perimeter trail from several park locations. Visitors will enjoy hiking the ridges of Cane Creek Mountain, World's Edge, and Sugarloaf Mountain. Short, looped hiking options will also be provided near the day use areas. Hikers will enjoy Pool Creek and views from Stony and Rich Mountain. Access to hike-in primitive camping will be available from most day use areas.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR PERIMETER TRAIL: \$612,000

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR WORLD'S EDGE TRAIL: \$152,000

CANE CREEK LOOP TRAIL

A proposed trail in the central section of the park will connect the visitor center at the Meadows to Bottomless Pools. This trail will connect with local town greenways so visitors can access adjacent regional activities. Visitors at the proposed day use area at Bottomless Pools will have the option to connect to two looped trails at the northeast part of the Cane Creek Mountain Trail.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR CANE CREEK LOOP TRAIL: \$117,000

NORTHERN CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK TRAILS

Hiking trails in northern Chimney Rock State Park are proposed around southern Rumbling Bald, Shumont Mountain, and Eagle Rock. From Eagle Rock, trails will be routed south of the summit, away from residences. An existing jeep trail extends from Eagle Rock along the ridgeline of Rumbling Bald Mountain. While parts of the jeep trail are usable for hiking, eastern portions of this trail are dangerously eroded and will need rerouting to the north to sustain foot traffic and to protect adjacent natural resources.

Backcountry trails are proposed at the far reaches north of Rumbling Bald, where hike-in primitive camping will be available. Backcountry trails in this location are more remote and further from day use areas. Connections to Weed Patch Mountain through mountain biking trails will also be possible from this area in northern Chimney Rock State Park. Vehicle access and trailhead facilities to northern Rumbling Bald and Weed Patch Mountain will be developed through a partnership with the Town of Lake Lure and other stakeholders.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR RUMBLING BALD MOUNTAIN TRAILS: \$1,064,000

All proposed Chimney Rock State Park trails will be designed sustainably, using natural surfaces and following existing contours. Sustainable trails are designed for continual visitor use with minimized impacts. All trails will be constructed with low impact machinery or by hand, where feasible. A successful network of sustainably designed and constructed trails will control stormwater and erosion, keep users on the designated trails, and limit maintenance requirements.

HIKE-IN/PRIMITIVE CAMPING

Hike-in/primitive camping will be available to Chimney Rock State Park visitors. Currently, no camping is permitted at the park, but the demand for a wide range of camping was indicated through the public input process.

No more than eight tent sites will be located at each primitive campground. Fire rings may be permitted at some locations. Wherever possible, primitive camping areas will be sited so as to not degrade the viewshed. All proposed sites will be located away from residences and roadways.

Primitive campgrounds are proposed at Cane Creek Mountain, near World's Edge, at the Orchards, and near the proposed Rumbling Bald day use area. Access to these sites will only be available on foot.



PRIMITIVE GROUP CAMPING

Camping facilities for organized groups will be based on reservations and will accommodate 10-15 tents. Providing group campsites eliminates displacement of other users from single campsites by large groups. Group camping also reduces noise and overcrowding in primitive camping areas. Primitive group camping will be provided at the Orchards only.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BUDGET FOR PRIMITIVE CAMPSITES THROUGHOUT PARK:
\$200,000

PICNICKING

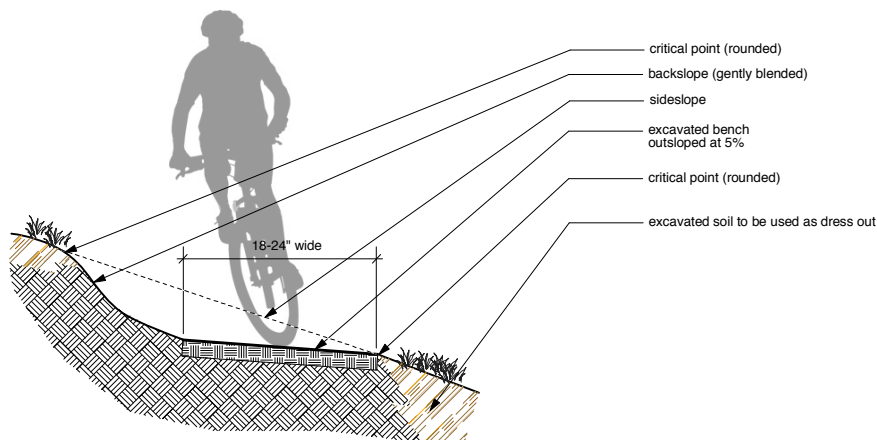
The demand for picnicking facilities continues to grow among park visitors. Existing picnic sites at the attraction are located at waysides along the park entrance road and do not provide adequate space or respite. Proposed picnic areas will be located away from major roadways and include seating, tables, and trash and recycling receptacles at a minimum. Picnicking will be made available to park visitors at all day use areas and at the visitor center. Picnicking will be permitted along the hiking trails in north and south Chimney Rock State Park, however a “leave-no-trace” policy will prevail.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

A single-track mountain bike trail system is proposed on the Weed Patch Mountain and King tracts to provide a type of trail experience not currently available in the park. Visitors will access Weed Patch Mountain through property owned by the Town of Lake Lure from Buffalo Creek Road. The Town of Lake Lure plans to implement a parking area, trailhead, hiking, and mountain biking facilities at this location. A cooperative agreement with the Town of Lake Lure and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will need to be established regarding the joint operations of this area.

Partnership opportunity is possible with the region’s nonprofit mountain biking organization. The Southeastern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) works with land managers across the southeastern United States to design, construct, and maintain trail networks for mountain biking. SORBA specializes in the design and construction of sustainable trails. If implemented, SORBA trail builders will adhere to International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) design guidelines for all proposed mountain bike trails in Chimney Rock State Park and work closely with park staff to design and implement the trails. Figure 10.9 shows a typical mountain bike trail design proposed at Chimney Rock State Park.

FIGURE 10.9: TYPICAL MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL



Design guideline information obtained from IMBA



EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Equestrian trails are popular in mountainous regions because horses can negotiate steep terrain in remote areas. Typically, horses require a minimum trail width of at least six feet and a preferred width of 12 feet. Vertical clearances are between 10-12 feet. Although natural tread is recommended, the sub-base and sub-grade of the trail must be compacted to accommodate horses and their riders. Access roads that can support vehicles towing trailers, large parking and staging areas, and access to water will be necessary to support equestrians. These facilities can demand a substantial amount of flat space, a condition that is limited at Chimney Rock State Park.

Opportunities for equestrian trails and facilities were examined within the study area. The only area identified as potentially suitable for either mountain biking and equestrian use in the master plan study area is on the Weed Patch Mountain tract. The only identified access to Weed Patch Mountain tract will be in cooperation with the Town of Lake Lure's planned town park at Buffalo Creek Rd. Due to topographical constraints, the town park will have very limited parking and cannot accommodate equestrian use. As such, equestrian use at Chimney Rock State Park cannot be reasonably provided at this time. Future master plan revisions could consider equestrian use if suitable land with access becomes available. Table 10.2 identifies equestrian opportunities in vicinity to the park.

TABLE 10.2: EQUESTRIAN TRAILS NEAR CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

NAME	LOCATION
River Side Riding Stables	Chimney Rock
Brunner Stables	Hendersonville
Moses Cone Park	Blue Ridge Parkway
Holly View Farm	Dupont State Forest
The Walk Inn	Dupont State Forest
South Toe River Area	Pisgah National Forest
Tsali Horse Trail	Tsali Recreation Area

ROCK CLIMBING

Rock climbing and bouldering has been a popular recreational activity in the Hickory Nut Gorge for more than 30 years. The Carolina Climbers Coalition (CCC) and the Access Fund have been active in their role for public land conservation, including the purchase of a six-acre tract on the west side of the Rumbling Bald boulder fields. Chimney Rock State Park currently operates public climbing access from the Rumbling Bald Climbing Day Use Area. Rock climbing occurs along the south facing cliffs of Rumbling Bald and the adjacent boulder fields. The south face of Rumbling Bald contains a network of trails that connect to the climbing cliffs and boulder fields owned by the CCC and The Nature Conservancy. Due to the site's lack of historical land management and growth in popularity, user impacts have been concentrated at Rumbling Bald. These heavily used areas should be restored through cooperative work between the CCC and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. Fox Mountain Guides operates fee-based climbing clinics at the base of Chimney Rock Mountain.

Many of the desired climbing and bouldering areas in the Chimney Rock State Park study area are located in nationally significant natural heritage areas with sensitive ecosystems. Using data from the Natural Heritage and Natural Resources programs, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will work closely with the CCC and the climbing community to develop a comprehensive climbing and bouldering management



plan that determines the extent of opening additional climbing and bouldering areas in the park. The future comprehensive climbing and bouldering management plan should follow three basic conditions to satisfy the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation's goal of balancing conservation, recreation, and education:

- 1) *Climbing and bouldering areas in the state park must be on lands owned by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.* Although the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation provides access to the south face of Rumbling Bald from the climbing day use area on Boys Camp Road, much of the south facing climbing area is on privately-owned property. Access to other popular climbing areas not currently owned by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will be determined by the existing landowners. The comprehensive climbing and bouldering management plan will focus on areas currently owned by state parks.
- 2) *Climbing and bouldering areas must have proper road access.* All state park climbing and bouldering access areas must have a safe, legal, accessible public access. If adequate parking isn't already available, access areas must be feasible for the development of low impact parking areas and hiking trails to the climbing areas. Land in climbing access areas must be owned by either the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation or by a partnering organization or agency.
- 3) *Climbing and bouldering routes and access areas must not negatively impact the park's natural resources.* Protecting natural resources from potential recreational activity impacts will be fact-based, using data obtained from the Natural Heritage Program and Natural Resources Program.

The comprehensive climbing and bouldering management plan will require significant input, discussion, and field verification between the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, the climbing community, and other stakeholders. Careful consideration will be given to additional climbing area proposals, but in some instances, preventing climbing access in highly sensitive areas will be necessary in order to protect fragile and rare ecosystems. Using the conditions stated above, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will work with the climbing community to consider opening additional climbing areas through the development of a comprehensive climbing and bouldering management plan.

INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

Part of the mission of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is to interpret and promote the state's natural heritage and environmental resources. It is also a primary goal of the master plan for Chimney Rock State Park. In addition to the educational facilities proposed at the visitor center, a variety of opportunities exist to interpret the natural heritage of the park and the region. The development of an interpretive network is recommended that will correspond with all proposed trails at Chimney Rock State Park. The network will be self-guided or organized by park staff as guided hikes or educational programs.

The beautiful scenery in Chimney Rock State Park will be enjoyed from vistas and viewing platforms that incorporate interpretive signage. The overlooks will be strategically located along trails and at some day use areas. It is essential that these areas not encroach on any viewsheds or natural resources. Situating overlooks on heavily vegetated bluffs and away from toilet buildings or concessions will help to control noise and crowding.



SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT BUDGET COSTS

<u>DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM</u>	<u>BUDGET COST</u>
Repairs and Renovation	\$850,000
Visitor Center at the Meadows	\$20,751,200
World's Edge Day Use Area	\$650,000
Bottomless Pools Day Use Area	\$700,000
Rumbling Bald Day Use Area	\$940,200
New Skyline Trail Alignment	\$163,000
Orchards Loop Trail	\$351,000
Perimeter Trail	\$612,000
World's Edge Trail	\$152,000
Cane Creek Loop Trail	\$117,000
Rumbling Bald Mountain Trails	\$1,064,000
<u>Primitive Campsites</u>	<u>\$200,000</u>
TOTAL	\$26,550,400



LAND ACQUISITION OBJECTIVES

Natural resource protection, scenic preservation, outdoor recreation, and public access will continue to be the primary purposes for which N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation should acquire land to expand Chimney Rock State Park over the next 50 years. A land objectives map is illustrated in Figure 10.10 and summarized on the following pages.

PRIMARY RESOURCE PROTECTION

The protection of significant natural resources such as significant natural heritage areas, rare species habitat or significant land identified in the biodiversity assessment of the conservation planning tool.

SCENIC RESOURCE PROTECTION

The protection views of and from the mountains around Lake Lure including Chimney Rock itself.

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

The protection of water quality of streams in the state park and flowing from the state park. These include Pool Creek, Wolf Creek, Fall Creek and parts of the Broad River.

FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

Land identified for future state park facilities such as picnic areas and trail heads.

BUFFERS

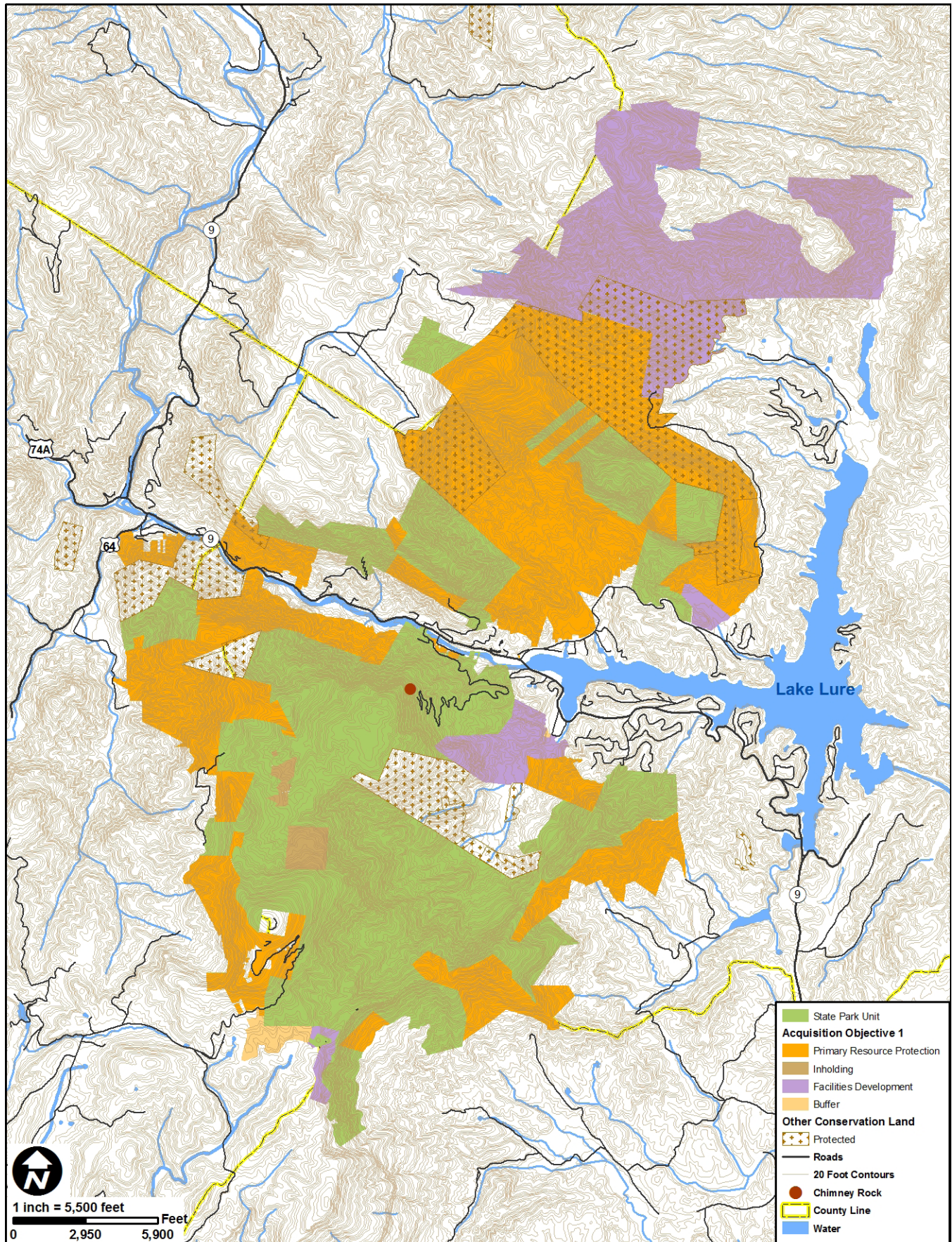
Land to improve boundary management and allow for facilities to be away from incompatible land uses.

INHOLDINGS

Inholding tracts have existing state park land on multiple sides and/or have access through state park property.

Chimney Rock State Park will continue to be enlarged to support the three primary objectives of the park development program: conservation management, education and stewardship, and access and recreation. The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation will eventually complete acquisition of all priority lands that support the state park mission and operations as the partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, and Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina continues.

FIGURE 10.10 LAND ACQUISITION OBJECTIVES MAP





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